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# **IN CIA Financed Student Group It's News To Me, BJ Staffer Says**

Beacon Journal staffer Craig Wilson was public relations director for the National Student Association from September, 1949, to November, 1950. The group was reported Tuesday to have been subsidized by the CIA "since the early '50's."

By CRAIG WILSON

An abandoned elementary school building near the University of Wisconsin at Madison was the dismal, drafty home for six idealistic young student leaders of the NSA and myself.

We set traps for mice, advised campus governments and arranged student tours to Europe. We fought for academic freedom, watched the Communists kill it in Eastern Europe and tried to avoid being called Communists ourselves.

When the witch-hunters wanted our references, we referred them to J. Edgar Hoover of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Our president at the time was an Irish lad named Kelly from a Jesuit college in the East. That seemed to convince some of the doubters.

WE WERE fighters for student rights, but not sick protesters. We wore peacoats and battle jackets. We had brush cuts and we had an old Chevie named "Matilda."

We were paid \$35 a week. We learned how to ask for a fourth refill of hot water for our teapot at the corner Rennebohm drug store. Add a liberal dose of milk and sugar each time—lunch.

All of us had taken leaves of absence from our home campuses to manage the NSA office. The others were student government officers and delegates to the group's national convention. But not me.

I had been an editor of the Michigan Daily at the University of Michigan. I'd been working my way through school and I needed a break. And I thought I could save up some of the \$35.

TO ME, NSA represented a means of exchanging ideas and asserting the student viewpoint—a campus version of the National Municipal League. About 300 student governments were dues-paying members, including most Big Ten and many Ohio schools.

What few dollars were left after salaries, I spent to print student affairs handbooks, manuals, and leaflets which we stapled up and mailed back to the campuses.

Cash was so short we used to joke about the dues checks which would arrive made out to the "National Students Association." The correct title was "National Student—no S— Association."

WE ENVISIONED the day when we could afford to haughtily return them: "Dear Sir: There is no group as the National Students Association. Henceforth, remit payment in the name of..."

But we were too hungry to quibble.

NSA leaders were distressed because Communists had taken control of the International Union of Students and turned its worldwide student meetings into demonstrations for "peace" Russian-style. NSA representatives were labeled "warmongers."

About this time, NSA set out to probe student sentiments on a worldwide basis independently. A dozen or so students were selected to spend the Summer of 1950 abroad in Europe, Africa and Asia. Funds were sought from individuals who had funds to administer in the interest of freedom.

ONE student and myself kept an appointment that Spring in an impressive law office in the Chicago loop, another in a large house near Wilmington, Del.

A few days later, NSA received checks for \$600 from some persons we met. If it was Central Intelligence Agency

money, we didn't know it.

But the money helped put a dozen students aboard boats for overseas.

That fall, NSA put together the students' reports from the worldwide campus grassroots. The reports clearly pinpointed Asia as the arena in which the Cold War would be fought.

Right they were!

But by then a new group of student leaders had been elected and installed in dusty Draper School. My term hadn't expired. I stuck around a couple of months, then resigned.

I found I could make \$10 a week more driving a taxicab at Ann Arbor and still take a few classes.

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